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November 2, 1900

JAPAN.

Plague in Japan from July 1 to September 15, 1900.

YOKOHAMA, JAPAN, September 25, 1900.

SIR : In accordance with instructions from your office, dated July 7, 1900, I have the honor to submit the following report of conditions and transactions in the district under my supervision, for the period July 1 to September 15, 1900 :

On July 16, occurred the last case of the second outbreak of plague in Osaka, which began about April 10.

On August 15, a case of plague was detected upon the steamship *Coptic*, outward bound from San Francisco to Hongkong, via Honolulu, Yokohama, and the Japanese and Chinese ports south of the last-named place, upon the arrival of the ship at Kobe. This case, which presented both bubonic and pneumonic symptoms, proved fatal on the 18th, and the ship was duly quarantined for ten days from the completion of the process of disinfection, resuming her voyage on the 28th. The interesting point of this case relates to the probable source of infection. No plague had been present in Honolulu, where the victim, a Chinese steerage passenger, embarked, for several months before the arrival of the ship at that port, nor has there as yet been a single instance of the disease in Yokohama. It seems credible, therefore, that the bacilli were contained in effects, perhaps packed during the prevalence of the plague in Honolulu, and which were opened or worn during the voyage. No second case had appeared upon the ship up to the time of her arrival here, on the return voyage, September 13.

August 20, the routine disinfection of steerage passengers at Yokohama, which began with the first epidemic appearance of plague at Kobe in November, 1899, had been since steadily maintained, was discontinued upon the urgency of the steamship companies concerned, I consenting in view of the facts that no case of plague had occurred in Japan for over one month, that no other infectious quarantinable disease was prevalent, and that emigration of the lower or laboring classes was, as it still is, practically prohibited by the Japanese Government. The shipping companies were, however, formally notified at this time that, should any quarantinable disease manifest itself epidemically, the precautions required will be again strictly carried into effect, and that, in such a case, they must supply the necessary buildings and equipment.

On September 11, plague was again detected in Osaka, and, from the 11th to the 14th there were 8 cases, all fatal. On the 15th, when the presence of the malady as an epidemic, was first made known, I cabled you at once. On the same date I issued to the steamship companies through their agents, the following notification, which I trust they will speedily act upon :

YOKOHAMA, JAPAN, September 15, 1900.

To agents of steamship companies.

The renewed outbreak of plague in Osaka demands the immediate enforcement of the precautions outlined in circular from this office of date April 15, 1900.

As the former disinfection depot has been broken up, I would suggest that you, without delay, arrange with your colleagues in the steamship business for its reestablishment at once, upon the same general lines as before. I believe that the premises formerly occupied are still available.

I would remind you that I am instructed to refuse bills of health to any ship carrying passengers who have not been submitted to the treatment prescribed by the United States Quarantine Regulations.

Respectfully,

STUART ELDREDGE, M. D.,
Sanitary Inspector, U. S. M. H. S.

From July 1 to September 15 I inspected 49 vessels, of which 7 were sailing ships and 42 steamers, 25 of the latter carrying steerage passengers; or an average of 1 ship visited for inspection every thirty-seven and one-half hours. The total number of steerage passengers examined was 2,705, and of crews, 3,825, or, in all, 6,530 persons inspected.

During the same period 342 pieces of baggage were disinfected, and, including these, 464 inspected.

As smallpox has not been present either in Yokohama or on board of any ship inspected during the term covered by this report, in compliance with the regulations of January 16, 1900, no vaccinations have been performed.

The measures taken by the Japanese Government for restricting the extension of plague have undoubtedly been exceedingly successful. Conditions among the lower classes in Japan, and in the crowded slums of a city like Osaka, which has long been regarded as a most unhygienic locality, are so favorable to the propagation of any filth born or nurtured malady that the limitation of the disease to a very small number of people must be regarded as a most brilliant example of the effectiveness of modern scientific methods.

With regard to the actual extirpation of the germs of the pestilence, though every means known to sanitarians has been employed for this purpose, and with apparent success so far as Kobe is concerned, the results, on the whole, are not reassuring. It is true that in Osaka the disease ceased to appear from January 11 until April 8 or 10 of this year, but then, breaking out again, it continued until July 16, when it again became dormant until September 11.

Now, independently of the well-recognized peculiarity of the epidemicity of pest, in exhibiting periods of amelioration or cessation, followed by aggravation, not always with apparent cause, it may be stated that, in the case of Osaka, the first interval of freedom from cases, after the primary outbreak, coincided almost exactly with the onset of the colder weather of the winter, while again, the term of abeyance from July 16, to September 11, corresponded to the hottest and at the same time, least humid summer known in Japan for many years. Such seasonal periodicity is, of course, within limits, to be expected in the case of a disease of which the history seems to demonstrate its decided predilection for the more temperate seasons, which will, probably, be often manifested, irrespective of any measures employed to combat the epidemic.

Researches in Japan strongly support the growing tendency to consider the rat the most important agency in the maintenance and distribution of the pest bacillus, if not the original source of epidemics of plague among men.

Of course, this fact, if it be a fact, renders the extinction of the disease more difficult of achievement than if it were a malady of men only, or of men and of animals less widely distributed, furtive, and cunning than Mus decumanus.

In Osaka, particularly, in attempting upon a large scale the destruction of the rats, a serious obstacle was encountered, chiefly in the quarters inhabited by the better class of traders, in the superstition of the latter which connects their own material prosperity with the presence of rats about the premises. Whether this superstition is a growth of the period, not very remote, when, in Japan, rice, in kind, constituted the greater portion of the currency and most of the stored wealth of the people; and numerous rats implied full warehouses, I can not say, but it seems probable that such is the case. This well-rooted belief will

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certainly go far in counteracting the attempts of the sanitary authorities to reduce the number of rodent vermin.

Respectfully,

STUART ELDRIDGE,
Acting Assistant Surgeon, U. S. M. H. S.

The SURGEON-GENERAL,
U. S. Marine-Hospital Service.

Plague in Osaka from September 11 to 27.

YOKOHAMA, JAPAN, September 29, 1900.

SIR: As regards the outbreak of plague at Osaka, I have the honor to report that, from the appearance of the disease September 11 up to the 27th instant, there have been 26 cases.

The authorities are using all the means in their power for the control of the disease in Osaka itself, but I can not learn that the system of inland quarantine and inspection, which was strictly and effectively applied during the epidemic of last winter, has as yet been enforced.

Respectfully,

STUART ELDRIDGE, M. D.,
Acting Assistant Surgeon, U. S. M. H. S.

The SURGEON-GENERAL,
U. S. Marine-Hospital Service.

Report of maritime quarantine service at Kobe from June 30 to September 15, 1900.

KOBE, JAPAN, September 30, 1900.

SIR: I have the honor to send in my supplemental report for the period from June 30 to and including September 15, 1900.

The number of vessels bound for the United States of America from Kobe was 33, 3 of these being sailing ships, while 9 left Kobe for Manila. Their various destinations are as follows: Fourteen to San Francisco via Honolulu, 7 to New York (one sailing ship), 3 to Tacoma, 3 to Seattle, 2 to Portland, Oreg., 2 to San Diego via Honolulu, 2 to Port Townsend (sailing ships), 9 to Manila; total, 42.

The nationalities were: British, 22; American, 7; Japanese, 7; German, 4; Norwegian, 2.

The hospital ship *Relief* came up from Nagasaki and remained in harbor here for a few days before returning to Nagasaki and Taku.

Two United States transports likewise came in to land their horses for a run ashore for some days before proceeding on to Manila.

The number of emigrants and steerage passengers taken on here and examined was 304. The number of Chinese steerage in transit from Hongkong examined was 830.

Another recurrence of plague occurred in Osaka on September 8, when 2 cases were discovered, after the city had been free from the disease for seventy days. Fourteen cases and 8 deaths were officially notified up to September 15. All the usual precautions were at once taken and continue to be carried out.

This district has been remarkably free from cholera this year, 1 case and 1 death being notified in July and 2 cases in August.

The Occidental and Oriental Steamship Company's steamer *Coptic* was placed in quarantine by the Japanese authorities on August 16, when on her voyage to Hongkong.

A Chinese rice farmer living 14 miles from Honolulu was taken on board as a steerage passenger on August 2, at Honolulu. On the steamer's arrival at Kobe on August 15 he was found to be suffering